

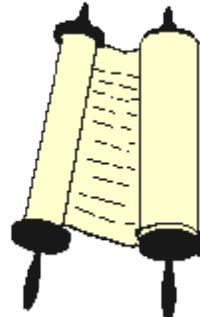
- How were the Bible books chosen? How was the Biblical canon determined?
- The Biblical canon was not chosen over night or by one person.
- Note at Mt.2:4 to go with Mk.1:22. "...not as the Scribes.":
- SCRIBES. The "teachers of the law" (or "scribes") were so called because it was their office to make copies of the Scriptures, to classify and teach the precepts of the oral law (see Pharisees, Mat 3:7, note), and to keep careful count of every letter in the O.T. writings. Such an office was necessary in a religion of law and precept, and was an O.T. function (2 Sam 8:17; 20:25; 1 Ki 4:3; Jer 8:8; 36:10,12,26). To this legitimate work the teachers added a record of rabbinical decisions on questions of ritual <(Halachoth);> the new code resulting from those decisions <(Mishna);> the Hebrew sacred legends (<Gemara,> forming with the <Mishna,> the <Talmud>); commentaries on the O.T. <(Midrashim);> reasonings upon these <(Hagada);> and, finally, mystical interpretations which found in Scripture meanings other than the grammatical, lexical, and obvious ones (the <Kabbala>), not unlike the allegorical method of Origen. In our Lord's time, the Pharisees considered it orthodox to receive this mass of writing which had been superimposed upon and had obscured the Scripture.<Christ> (first advent): vv. 1 - 6; Mat 4:16. (Gen 3:15; Acts 1:11)

- **Decisions about which books were "in" and which books were "out" in relation to today's Bible usually were not made by a single group of people at a single point of history.**

A. Stages of Canonization

Canonization (selection of which books were put in the Bible) was a process that went through several stages and took many centuries. These stages were not separate but sometimes overlapped:

- **Composition** (manuscripts were written either as a recording of oral stories and teachings or as original documents)
- **Community** (manuscripts were read, circulated, and revised within the religious communities)
- **Criteria** (certain manuscripts became accepted as authoritative scripture within the religious communities-- different groups accepted different scriptures)
- **Collection** (scriptures were gathered together in single scrolls, codices, and later in books-- the physical manner of collecting scriptures also had an influence on canonical decisions)
- **Canon** (a defined group of scriptures in a single collection became accepted by a certain religious community as The Bible-- different groups chose different canons)



Biblical Reflections

Choosing the canon that makes up the Bible was not an easy thing. Accounts in Scripture hint at the early church problems, debates, and different interpretations:

James 4:1
1 Timothy 6:3-4
2 Peter 2
2 John 2
Jude 4
Jude 8

- **What are some of the interpretations of Scripture that people still debate today?**
- **What influences or affects a persons interpretation of Scripture?**
- **What issues would have affected the debates, interpretations, and choosing of the canon?**

Whose Canon? Which Bible?



Protestants tend to think there is only one Bible-- ours.

Actually different religious groups of the Judeo-Christian tradition have different biblical canons.

Different Inside Books

Some canons are smaller than the Protestant Bible; others are larger:

- **The smallest Bible is claimed by the Samaritans, who recognize only the **first five books** of the Bible (the Pentateuch).**
 - **The largest Bible is that of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, which has 81 books**
- B. New Testament

Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Greek Orthodox Christians agree on the same 27 books for the composition of the New Testament; however some smaller groups of Christians do not. The Nestorian, or Syrian church, recognizes only 22 books, excluding 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation.

On the other hand, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church includes the same 27 books in its "narrower" canon but adds 8 books to its "broader" canon: "four sections of church order from a compilation

called Sinodos, two sections from the Ethiopic Books of Covenant, Ethiopic Clement, and Ethiopic Didascalia."¹

C. Old Testament

The Jewish Bible and the Protestant Old Testament contain the same books but they are **arranged in a different order**. Additionally, books that Protestant Christians divide into two parts (Kings, Chronicles, Samuel, and Ezra-Nehemiah) are only one book in the Hebrew Bible.

In terms of the Old Testament, **Roman Catholic**, Greek Orthodox, **Ethiopian Orthodox**, and other Eastern Christians claim more "inside books".

The books of the "second canon" are considered "inside" by Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Ethiopic Christians; the latter group adds even more books beyond the deuterocanonicals. Protestants consider the same books "outside" however they give the Apocrypha high status, considering them valuable for instruction and spiritual edification.

The Ethiopian Orthodox church's narrower Old Testament canon includes the books of the **Hebrew Bible**, all of the **Apocrypha**, and "Jubilees, 1 Enoch, and Joseph ben Gurion's (Josippon's) medieval history of the Jews and other nations."²

Date(s)	Bible-related	Cultural/historical
A.D./C. E.		
5 B.C.-5 <u>c.</u> 4 B.C. birth of Jesus A.D.		
6	Quirinius' census Zealots' tax revolt	heavy hand of Rome on Palestine
30s	The adult life and ministry of Jesus Rabbi Hillel the Elder, Babylon	14-37 Emperor Tiberius
<u>c.</u> 36-69	Oral transmission of message and story of Jesus 48-64 Letters of Paul <u>c.</u> 60 ["Q" document] 68-70 Dead Sea Scrolls hidden in caves	church in Jerusalem <u>c.</u> 47-57 missionary travels of Paul <u>c.</u> 67, Peter martyred
<u>c.</u> 70-	Last books of OT	70 Jewish revolt against Rome

150	Apocrypha written Gospel compilation and editing c. 70 Mark c. 80 Matthew c. 90 Luke and John **** c. 110 Didache c. 80-150 Non-canonical gospels	fails; Jerusalem sacked, Temple destroyed by Romans center of Christianity shifts from Jerusalem to Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome; martyrdoms under Domitian, Trajan, etc.
90s	Council of Jamnia, formation of Hebrew Bible canon 1st Epistle of Clement	Church's early structure established: bishops, presbyters, and deacons rabbinic movement develops from Pharisees
c.125-225	Christian apologists defending their faith Gnostic writings such as Nag Hammadi manuscripts Marcionism, Montanism c. 125 The Shepherd of Hermas Mishnah, Talmud written down	c. 160 Marcion dies c. 200 Irenaeus dies Origen (Egypt) Tertullian (North Africa)
250-400	325 Council of Nicaea 367 Athanasius lists 27 N.T. books 381 Council of Constantinople 397 North African Council, Carthage, determines canon Jerome translates Vulgate Nag Hammadi writings hidden	250 persecution under Decius 303 persecution under Diocletian 313 Constantine converts to Christianity
400s	431 Council of Ephesus 451 Council of Chalcedon	St. Anthony of the Desert (Egypt) Desert Fathers and Mothers early monasticism St. Ambrose of Milan St. Augustine of Hippo (North Africa)

		St. Cyril of Alexandria murder of Hypatia
500s	525: Dionysius Exiguus sets birth of Jesus and Christian calendar at Dec. 23, A.D. 1	Justinian, Emperor in the East, rebuilds St. Sophia in Constantinople
600s		640 Library of Alexandria with 300,000 manuscripts completely destroyed
700-800s	c. Bede translates some scriptures into Anglo-Saxon Slavonic translation	Greek monks evangelize Slavs controversy over icons
900s	Masoretic text of Hebrew Bible finalized	Northwest Europe: Celtic monks struggle against raiding Norsemen to preserve Christian writings
1000s-1200s		1054 East-West church schism Crusades begin Norman, then Gothic cathedrals are built
1300s	1380-97 Wycliffe translates Bible into Middle English	"Babylonian Captivity" of papacy in Avignon
1400s	1456 Gutenberg Bible (Vulgate) is printed	Western European Renaissance begins 1453 fall of Constantinople to Turks
1500s	Tyndale, Coverdale translate Bible into English; Luther into German 1536 King Henry VIII breaks with Church of Rome 1546 Council of Trent begins 1549 <i>Book of Common Prayer</i> 1560 Geneva Bible 1572 Bishops' Bible 1592 Sixto-Clementine Vulgate	1517 Luther acts at Wittenberg; Reformation begins (northern Europe) 1534 Society of Jesus (Jesuits) founded 1546 Scottish Reformation 1572 massacre of Protestants in France

1600s	1611 King James Bible published, becomes Authorized Version 1648 Westminster Confession	Wars of Religion in Germany 1640-60 English Civil War and Protectorate
1700s	Established churches preach acceptance of status quo as will of God	John and Charles Wesley use King James Bible and <i>Book of Common Prayer</i>, preach to common people Oppression of Jews everywhere, Catholics in Britain
1800s	1885 British Revised Version of the Bible German scholars begin to apply historical-critical methods to the Bible Missionary organizations translate Bible into many languages	Missionary activity intensifies in colonized regions of world 1848 Karl Marx publishes <i>Das Kapital (Capital)</i> 1859 Darwin publishes <i>The Origin of Species</i>, with theory of evolution
1900s	1901 American Standard Version 1907 Pope Pius X condemns Modernist movement of Biblical Criticism 1923 J. Gresham Machen, fundamentalist leader, writes <i>Christianity and Liberalism</i> Critical methods develop; Biblical criticism becomes academic discipline 1945 Nag Hammadi Library discovered 1947 Dead Sea Scrolls discovered	Some Christians die as martyrs in holocaust (Edith Stein, Dietrich Bonhoeffer); Other Christians, such as the Ten Booms, shelter Jews or do other forms of resistance Ecumenical organizations (World Council of Churches, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A) are founded.
late 1900s	1952 Revised Standard Version Emergence of women's, Third-world, and liberation Bible scholarship 1989 New Revised Standard Version	Arab-Israeli conflicts in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973 1960s key time for Civil Rights movement in U.S. Rise of fundamentalism 1980s upsurge of terrorism internationally <i>Intifada</i>--Palestinian nationalist

**Dead Sea Scrolls made movement
widely available
1995 New Jerusalem Bible**

2. Ancient biblical manuscripts were written on different materials, such as papyrus and parchment. These materials took different forms such as pages, scrolls, and codices. Around the second century, scrolls were replaced by codices. (Parchment scrolls are still used in Jewish synagogues, however.) A codex was a hand-written book with leaves. Later the codex was replaced by the printed book.

Papyrus

Papyrus (made from an Egyptian plant) was the material on which most of the earliest biblical manuscripts were written. Papyrus scrolls could be as long as 35 feet.

- **[Papyrology Home Page](#)** by John D. Muccigrosso. All you ever wanted to know about papyrus and lots of links (some of which no longer work).
From the Duke University Papyrus Archive
- **[Writing in Egypt under Greek and Roman Rule](#)** by Peter van Minnen (This article has pictures of papyrus manuscripts)
- **[Dating the Oldest New Testament Manuscripts](#)** by Peter van Minnen
- **[Picture of Prayer in Greek on Papyrus](#)** This prayer uses the Septuagint (LXX) version of Psalms 26 and 41 (*click on the smaller image to see a bigger version of it*)
- **[Picture of Matthew 1:1 in Coptic on Papyrus](#)** (*click on the smaller image to see a bigger version of it*)

Parchment

Papyrus later gave way to the more durable and expensive parchment (made from leather) as the material of choice for writing down scripture.

- **[Picture of Parchment Scroll Forty-one biblical psalms on one of the Dead Sea Scrolls](#)** (*click on the smaller image to see a bigger version of it*)
- **[Torah Scrolls](#)** Information about the parchment Torah Scrolls used in contemporary Jewish worship from the Judaism 101 web site.
- **Visitor Opinion -**
You mention peoples views on the Gnostic Gospels not being as accurate as the Bible gospels. How many times have the Bible gospels been translated and edited to fit into the modern day Bible by

Constantine? Making you could do some research and find out if Dan's [Brown] information is correct about Constantine being a pagan and blending the gospels to form a modern bible that would appease for Christians and Pagans.

- Thanks for your time and obvious hard work putting up this site, it helps people like me who are seeking answers to innumerable questions,
- My Response -
I have whole pages on the process involved in selecting and choosing which books are "fit" for the Bible. I don't say it's a wise or good process to throw out some things and keep other things. I just say that that is what they do :) It's extremely well documented that this picking and choosing went on, and there were MANY political reasons for what went in and what stayed out. Certainly "ease of getting people to accept the works" was a factor in there as were many other factors. So I don't think any one questions any of that.
- **Visitor Opinion** -
I agree with you that the bible was no doubt 'hand picked' and canonised, so to speak, by men. However, those who believe in the bible 100% as God's word, believe those picking it were entrusted (or instructed) by God to do so. As such, the gospels picked are chosen 'by God.' I know, because I live with one of these people! It is cause for healthy debate, believe me!!
- My Response -
Well yes, and that is why they believe the Pope is the mouthpiece of God as well. However, every group in religion has chosen a different set of books to include or exclude, so then you have to say that your religion is the only one that chose properly and everyone else chose incorrectly. And then you move on to the issue of translations. There are many, many translations out there and each one chooses different words and phrasings. Now you have to say one translation of your chosen books is correct and all others are incorrect. Then as time goes on, knowledge is gained and the group will choose a new translation to read. So now you're saying that you were incorrect before but have remedied the situation and with the NEW book you are now correct. Meaning that in another 100 years, you will probably get an even more improved version (as scholars learn more about the meanings of those older words and phrases) and that your new book will be even more accurate than the current one. Meaning you have to accept the possibility that the book you're using now is not fully accurate. It is only as accurate as our current knowledge of language is, which is not 100% accurate. So as much as you can say that the original writers were guided by God, and that the original book selectors were guided by God, and that the translators were guided by God, we are after all only human and we do make mistakes, which we later find and fix.

- Also, we have to remember that cultures change over the years and what is appropriate for one culture can easily turn out to be inappropriate for other cultures. The following instructions are given in the Bible - does your house-mate believe these things are currently valid? I'll assume she's a female and ask:
 - * Lev 1:9 - Is she burning the bull on the altar for sacrifice as she is supposed to?
 - * Exodus 21:7 - Does she feel it's OK to sell daughters into slavery for cash?
 - * Lev 15:19-24 - Is she sure to have NO contact with any male while menstruating? Does she tell other women the same?
 - * Lev 25:44 - Does she feel it's OK to buy slaves from other nations?
 - * Exodus 35:2 - Anyone working on the Sabbath should be killed. Is she positive she has never worked (picking up groceries counts) and has she properly slain anyone she knows who has done this?
 - * Lev 10:10 - Eating shellfish is stated to be an abomination. Is she careful not to do this herself or to allow others to?
 - * Lev 20:20 - Nobody should approach God's altar with defective sight. Has she told glasses/contact wearers to stay out of her church?
- If someone is going to say that 100% of what is in the Bible is true, then they better be following EVERY word in there. Because from that point of view, there is nothing inappropriate in the Bible, and it needs to be followed to the letter. My great-aunt was a strict believer in the Sabbath and that meant no cooking, no harvesting, no chores, no nothing. You ate leftovers all day, and you sat and talked with friends or read the Bible on your own. See if your "friend" is this obedient, I would doubt it.